

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT &amp; VOTING INFORMATION IN CLASSROOM STUDIES

## CALIFORNIA CIVICS

THE NEWSLETTER FOR AND BY CALIFORNIA'S HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

GET INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY!!!



About thirteen years ago, the Social Studies Department at Paramount High School\* began designing a semester project for their American Government students. The teachers were concerned that they were talking a lot about “democracy,” but were not actively involving their students in the democratic process. Mr. Equitz, a social studies teacher at Paramount High School, felt that students should be encouraged to put some of the good citizenship skills that they were reading about to use. The semester project that was subsequently designed started out as a simple letter-writing activity and has since developed into a range of projects, all of which give students the opportunity to become actively involved in various levels of their community.

The semester project is now a major part of Mr. Equitz's class instruction and discussion. In order to ensure that every student will be able to choose at least one of the project options, he has structured the projects to accommodate the various personalities and time commitments of his students. The projects range from writing letters to government officials, to volunteering with community organizations, such as homeless shelters and convalescent homes.

The most dramatic project option Mr. Equitz gives his students is the “Marine Care Package,” in which students organize and send care packages to U.S. Military stationed overseas. Care packages have included items such as CDs, candy, books, magazines, and letters addressed to “any Marine.” The students have sent boxes to servicemen and women in Bosnia, Japan, Yugoslavia, and the Persian Gulf. This past semester, 62 packages were sent to the 2,800 Marines serving with the 13th MEU (Marine Expeditionary Unit) on the ships USS Tarawa and Duluth.

Many of the servicemen and women, thankful for receiving the care packages, write letters back to the students. They all seem to share the sentiment of Sergeant Major Ybarra, who wrote, “It means a lot to me and my Marines to know that someone out there thinks about us... It is times like this, and special people like you and your teacher, that make us feel special and proud to be who we are and proud to do what we do.”

\* Paramount High School is located in Paramount, CA - Los Angeles County

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# The 26th Amendment

## Historical Background

In 1971, the 26th Amendment granting Americans 18 years of age and older the right to vote swept through Congress and the states faster than any previous Constitutional amendment. The driving force behind the measure came in large part from the country's youth who raised troubling questions about the legitimacy of a representative government that asked 18-to-20-year-olds to fight and die in the Vietnam War, but denied them the right to vote on war-related issues. The voting issue had emerged during both World War II and the Korean Conflict, but never before had youth joined in the public debate with such passion and conviction.

In the Congressional debate, the arguments in favor of lowering the voting age were distilled into five basic points: 1) Eighteen-year-olds deserve to vote; 2) Eighteen-year-olds are treated as adults in other respects; 3) Eighteen-year-olds are well qualified; 4) Granting the vote will combat youth alienation; and 5) Eighteen-year-old voters will benefit democracy.

## The Decline in Youth Voting and Prospects for Greater Participation

The high expectations associated with the adoption of the 26th Amendment laws have not been realized. Today, American youth are less likely to exercise the most basic tool of political participation - the vote. Youth voting has declined significantly since the 1972 election, when almost 50 percent of 18-to-24-year-olds cast a ballot. In the 2000 election, it is estimated that less than 35 percent went to the polls.

The decline in youth voting over the last 25 years parallels the decline in voting among the population overall. Analysts have pointed to a number of possible reasons: a disillusionment with politics in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal; the end of the draft; mean-spirited campaigns dominated by 30-second attack ads; and the atrophy of mediating institutions, such as civic organizations, churches, labor unions, and political parties.

Among youth, some observers have cited additional reasons: the possibility that Generations X and Y are more interested in personal matters than in political participation and that these inward-looking tendencies have been reinforced by some parents, teachers, and other adults who have also turned their back on the political process. The latter is especially troubling since it is essential that each generation take responsibility to educate and inspire the next generation in the values, importance, and practice of informed citizenship.

Source: Close-Up Foundation

## Web Res

The following websites are excellent resources for information on elections, politics, and civic engagement.

### Ben Franklin's Government Guide [bensguide.gpo.gov/9-12/index.html](http://bensguide.gpo.gov/9-12/index.html)

A service of the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, how our government works. It can answer many of your questions about how laws are made, and citizenship. It also includes the text of many government web sites.

### Close Up Foundation [www.closeup.org/](http://www.closeup.org/)

The mission of the Close Up Foundation is built on the belief that every young person should understand the democratic process and make it work. The Foundation's web site offers a virtual tour of Washington and provides information on education programs.

### Elections Division - Secretary of State [www.ss.ca.gov/elections/elections.htm](http://www.ss.ca.gov/elections/elections.htm)

The Elections Division section of the Secretary of State's website provides information on candidates, initiatives, and ballot measures. The site also provides information requested in the on-line form, a registration card you receive your form in the mail, all you have to do is sign it and drop it back in the mail (postage is free!). The site also has a link to our on-line version of the California CIVICS newsletter.

### Kids Voting California [www.kidsvotingcalifornia.com/](http://www.kidsvotingcalifornia.com/)

While fishing in Costa Rica, three Arizona businessmen discovered a flourishing democracy in Central America, consistently the most democratic country. For more than 40 years, the children of these fishermen became convinced that youth and parents to go to official polling sites together. Kids Voting by the California branch of Kids Voting, encourages K-12 students to participate in contests and special events.

### New Millennium Young Voters Project [www.stateofthevote.org](http://www.stateofthevote.org)

This website is the largest effort by a group of state election officials to address the declining participation of young people in the Internet. This site is part of the New Millennium Young Voters Project (NMYVP) in 1998 to address the alarming declines in youth participation in the questions and concerns of 18-24-year-olds. It includes headings like, "WHY," "WHO," "WHAT," and "WHERE" a U.S. president never even voted in his own election. A "Discussion" message board gives young people a place to discuss issues.

### Rock the Vote [www.rockthevote.org](http://www.rockthevote.org)

Rock the Vote (RTV) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that responds to a wave of political attacks on freedom of speech and the right of people to realize and utilize their power to affect change in the world. Such as education, violence, health, environment, civil rights, and difference. You can visit this site to register to vote, take action, and sign the Rock the Vote Demand Democracy Petition.

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t resources for learning more about  
community involvement.



## for Kids

ernment Printing Office, this fun website gives you the basics on questions about the electoral process, branches of government, text of historical documents, games & activities, and links to other

f that textbooks and lectures alone are not enough to help students tudents need a "close up" experience in government. Close up n, D.C., a civics quiz, policy polls, and information on their civic

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; web site is a valuable source of information on election results, Iso offers an on-line voter registration form. By completing the ard with your information will be printed and mailed to you. Once t, date it and select a political party affiliation (if you so choose) and s a voter outreach section where you can order free posters and tter.

aught more than they expected. They learned that Costa Rica, a as a voter turnout of 80 to 90 percent, the highest of any western of Costa Rica have voted alongside their parents on election day. citizens would benefit from a program that encourages kids and came the "prize catch" of their venture. This website, developed tudents to take their parents to the polls and offers information on

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on officials to reach out to disenfranchised young voters via the ers Project, formed by the National Association of Secretaries of i voter turnout among young people. The website is designed to n addition to basic election and voting information grouped under nd HOW," the site provides interesting trivia, like the reason one JH!" page contains links to political activist groups, and the site's ues with each other and ask questions.

ization, founded in 1990 by members of the recording industry in ech and artistic impression. RTV's website encourages young re civic and political lives of their communities. Focusing on issues, its, and free expression, this website shows how YOU can make a i interactive POLL index, send a web postcard to a friend, and sign

## Smart Voter

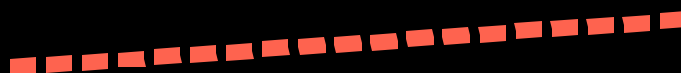
[www.smartvoter.org](http://www.smartvoter.org)

The Smart Voter website is produced by the League of Women Voters of California. It provides voters with comprehensive nonpartisan information about the contests on their ballot in an easy-to-use presentation and provides a means for candidates to publish information about themselves and their candidacy directly to voters. The Smart Voter site also allows users to find their custom ballot and polling place by entering their street address. In addition, the site lists links that are especially useful for youth, first-time voters, and anyone who has basic questions about our government, voting, and elections.

## Youth Vote

[www.youthvote2000.org/](http://www.youthvote2000.org/)

Youth Vote is the nation's largest non-partisan coalition working to increase the political involvement of 50 million Americans, 18-30 years old. The Youth Vote coalition consists of over seventy-five diverse national organizations representing hundreds of organizations and millions of young people. Youth Vote's web site is a valuable source of information. Want to find out how youth have impacted the 2000 elections? Looking for statistics and surveys on youth and elections? This is the website to go for regular updates on how young people are making a difference in our nation's democracy.



# Letters to the Editor

## How can I register to vote?

*You may register to vote:*

**\* By mail:** Mail-in registration forms are widely available at most post offices and libraries. If you cannot find one, please call 1-800-345-VOTE and a form will be sent to you; or

**\* By Internet:** Complete our on-line California Voter Registration Form at <http://www.ss.ca.gov/elections/votereg1.html>; or

**\* In person:** Go to any local election office in any city or town in the state and at any registration event you encounter anywhere in California; or

**\* At the DMV:** Fill out a voter registration form when applying for or renewing your driver's license or state identification card at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

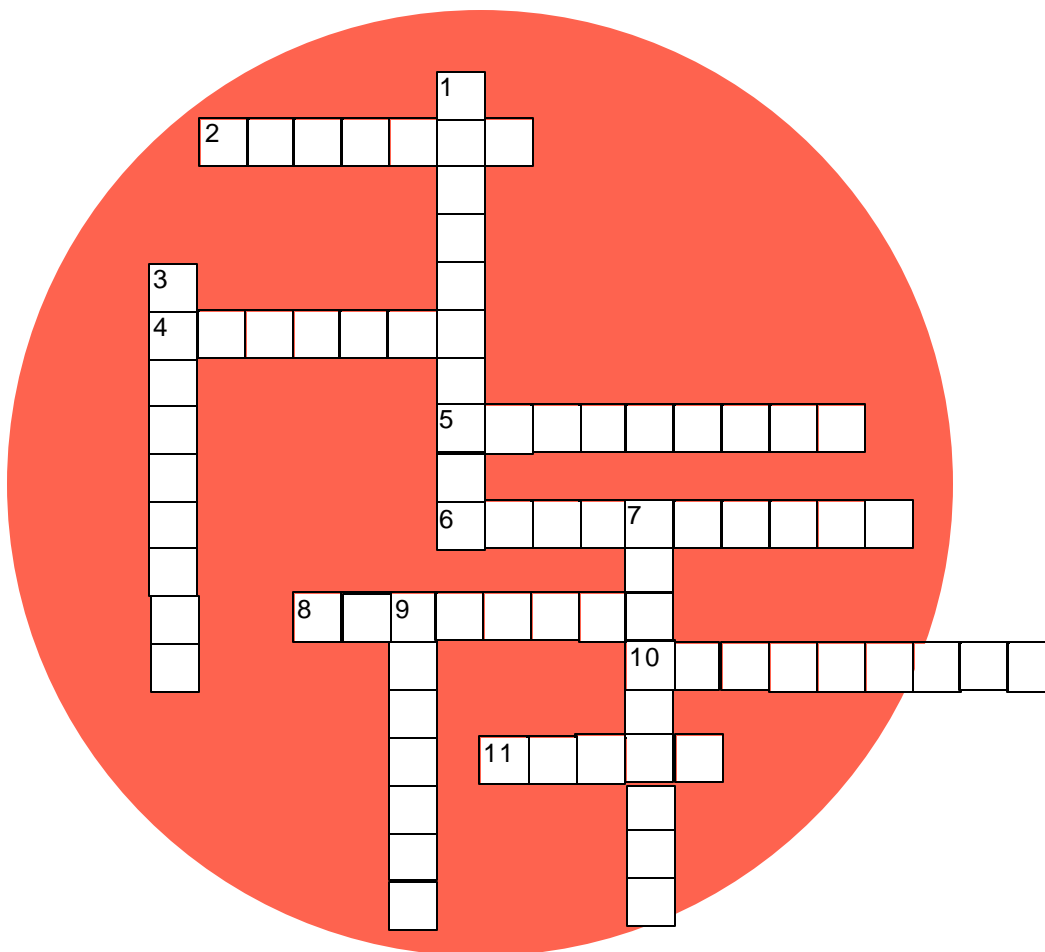
## How many people in California voted in the November 7, 2000 General Election?

70.94% of registered voters in California participated in the November 7, 2000 General Election.

## Let us know what you think!

**THIS IS YOUR CHANCE to voice your concerns about the government and political issues that are important to you. Let us know what you are doing to become involved in your community. Your questions, comments or concerns may be sent to Secretary of State, c/o California CIVICS, 1500 11th Street, 5th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814, or by e-mail at [CIVICS@ss.ca.gov](mailto:CIVICS@ss.ca.gov).**

# Just for Fun



## ACROSS:

- 2) General elections are always held on which day of the week?
- 4) In order to vote, you must be registered \_\_\_\_\_ days before the election.
- 5) Which U.S. amendment lowered the voting age to 18?
- 6) Which country was the first in the world to allow women to vote?
- 8) "Vote by mail" is also known as \_\_\_\_\_ voting.
- 10) Who was the only U.S. President to serve nonconsecutive terms?
- 11) Who received more votes than any other politician in history?

## DOWN:

- 1) Who was the only U.S. President to be voted unanimously, receiving all of the electoral votes?
- 3) An official, sworn statement of information used to register to vote; also known as a voter registration card.
- 7) California has 54 \_\_\_\_\_ votes.
- 9) An election in which the specific time for the holding is not prescribed by law.

## ANSWER KEY:

ACROSS:  
 2) Tuesday (General elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November in even-numbered years)  
 4) Fifteen (The 30th anniversary of California's ratification of the 26th Amendment is April 15, 2001)  
 5) Twenty Six (The 30th anniversary of California's ratification of the 26th Amendment is April 15, 2001)  
 6) New Zealand (In 1890 New Zealand began allowing women to vote)  
 8) Absentee  
 10) Cleveland (Grove Cleveland was elected in 1884 and again in 1892)  
 11) Nixon (Richard Nixon's vote-getting marathon included: three congressional terms, two terms as vice-president, a narrow loss to JFK in the 1960 presidential election, a run for Governor of California, his first election to Presidency in 1968, and a landslide re-election against George McGovern)

DOWN:  
 1) Washington (George Washington received all electoral votes; President James Monroe was almost re-elected unanimously - he lost by one vote)  
 3) Affidavit  
 7) Electoral  
 9) Special